(b) The average price realisation per metric tonne for wheat exports at Indian Ports comes to US$ 182.35 (FOB) approximately. The average C&F cost of imported wheat at Indian Ports comes to US$ 173 per metric tonne.

(c) Import of wheat was necessitated due to fall in production of foodgrains during 1995-96 crop and the consequent shortfall in procurement for the Central Pool.

Hike in Prices of Essential Commodities

1533. SHRI RAM GOPAL YADAV:
SHRI ISH DUTT YADAV:

Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whetherr Government adhere to the policy of maintaining the prices of essential commodities meant for the common man; and

(b) if so, in what manner the price hike of sugar, wheat and rice is to be explained?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) Yes, Sir. The Government have taken a number of steps to control the prices of essential commodities. In order to augment the supply of wheat, action has been taken to import wheat upto 2 million tonnes through State Trading Corporation. Apart from certain long term measures to increase the production of essential commodities, imports of commodities which are in short supply are encouraged to augment the availability of these items. Some of the commodities are also supplied through the Public Distribution System and Cooperative Stores on below market prices. State Governments/Union Territory Administrations have been advised to take stringent action against hoarders and black marketeers and others indulging in unfair trade practices under the Essential Commodities Act and Prevention of Black Marketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, etc.

(b) The price rise of essential commodities like sugar, wheat and rice is in tune with the general inflatienary trend prevailing all over the country. Further, decline in production of wheat and increase in the Statutory Minimum Prices of these commodities, alongwith the hike in petroleum products, can be attributed to the increase in the prices of these commodities.

Procured Wheat Lying Open in Punjab

1534. SHRI O.P. KOHLI: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether after the last rabi crop a large quantity of procured wheat has been lying in the open, particularly in Punjab, due to lack of adquate warehousing capacity;

(b) whether Government have made adequate arrangements for the proper storage of wheat after the coming rabi crop season; and

(c) if so, the broad details thereof and in case adequate arrangements have not been made for the purpose, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) to (c) Information is being collected and shall be laid on the Table of the House.

Encouraging new Sugar Units, A Food Disaster

1535. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item appearing in the Hindustan Times dated the 27th January, 1997, under the caption 'encouraging new sugar units is inviting a food disaster';

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of Government in regard thereto;

(c) whether Government are aware that due to large scale diversion of the